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Where Senator Russell Goes Astray

We have a great deal of respect for Senator Russell of Georgia. So, of course, do all his colleagues.

Now Senator Russell is engaged in a running donnybrook with some newspaper editors about how much the public has a right to know about the conduct of the country's defense. The senator last week said it was "absolutely ridiculous" to argue that the public has any right to know "the most highly secret of our defense plans." He added he had only "unspeakable contempt for any man in politics who would be frightened by newspapers telling him they would attack him because he was not giving them intimate details about defense planning."

Well, of course, it is ridiculous to

crets for hiding their own errors. And that happens far too frequently.

Nobody wants to know what weapons are being developed if that knowledge will help an enemy. But the public is entitled to know whether the people responsible for defense are doing the job they are supposed to do. It is not necessary that all knowledge of weaponry be broadcast from the housetops; but it is necessary that the Congress, which appropriates the public's money, keep tab on what is going on and whether we are doing enough and doing it the right way.

And just here, we think, is where Senator Russell goes astray. Perhaps he is inclined to trust the judgment of other men too much. Perhaps he is inclined to trust his own judgment too much; if Senator Russell thinks a thing all right, then there is an end to it; it is all right because he thinks so.

But we recall that a few years back there was a movement on in the Congress to have a watchdog committee appointed to oversee the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency. The purpose was to have six senators and six representatives empowered to question Mr. Allen Dulles as to what he was doing and how—after all, it is the responsibility of the Congress to declare war. Therefore it must be the right of Congress to know about activities that can lead us into war.

But Senator Russell stopped the proposal cold. Senator Russell assured his colleagues he was watching C.I.A. as closely as the law allowed. Later came the attack on from the creatures of the Congress—which the C.I.A. and the Department of Defense certainly are—with the judgment of one senator, even though he be as responsible, as knowing and



York in the Louisville Times

"These Stupid Newspapers and Magazines Print Every Stupid Thing I Do! even if it's not true. I would do so."

But we know lots of newspapers, and we're glad to be among them, that hold also in unspeakable contempt officials who use the excuse of national security or defense se